



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE CENTENARY OF SCHILLER'S DEATH.

BY WOLF VON SCHIERBRAND.

THE London of Elizabeth; the Versailles of Louis XIV; and the Weimar of Carl August—each was the centre of a great nation's literary golden age, and yet each how unlike the other! The age of the English renaissance, how it glitters and scintillates! How gallant and brave the men! How fair and erudite the women! On the ocean, the great Armada defeated, and the Hawkinses and Drakes and Raleighs laying the foundation of Britain's globe-encircling empire. Ashore, life seethes and boils; and, at the Mermaid Tavern, a half-score of literary Titans revel and feast in their Gargantuan way, Shakespeare among them, the greatest of them all. A time overflowing with nervous energy, colossal ambition, unmatched gifts!

At the polished and resplendent court of the *Roi Soleil*, Molière, Corneille, Racine bowing the knee in humble obeisance, and tuning ever anew their lyre in praise of the mighty monarch. The greatest era of French letters was also the acme of French political preponderance, a time when France alone faced a world in arms, when the lilies floated over virgin America.

And now look upon Germany! At the time of Schiller and Goethe, Wieland and Herder, Germany was wallowing in the very depths of political abasement, the prey of a haughty foreign conqueror, a mere "geographical idea," a heterogeneous conglomeration of hundreds of petty, impotent states. The peculiar historical development of Germany, its decentralization, the diffuseness of its culture and the marked difference in the ideals and sentiments which prevailed in its various provinces—all these things are sharply mirrored in the fact that it was at the court of an insignificant sovereign, at the capital of a ruler of a territory a few miles in width and with a population amounting

barely to that of one of half a dozen American cities of to-day, the two great stars of modern German literature, Schiller and Goethe, shone and shed their lustre over the surrounding kingdoms and principalities of Germany. Weimar was the humble home of the German muse. To-day, the tourist, hurriedly pacing the streets of the sleepy little city, is struck with the anomaly.

Whatever modern German literature has become, it owes scarcely anything to the wise, patriotic, fostering care of Germany's great rulers. Frederick the Great was for years the bosom friend and patron of Voltaire; but for the rising generation of German poets, essayists and dramatists he had nothing but scorn.

Seldom has a young and ardent poet confronted the world under more untoward circumstances than faced young Friedrich Schiller. Like Goethe, he got his poetic temperament from the maternal side. His father, captain in the Duke of Würtemberg's small army, for years served as chief of the recruiting-office in Gmünd. His "most serene master," Duke Carl Eugene, was one of those base German sovereigns who sold their subjects as "cannon fodder" to other Powers, especially England, and with the proceeds led a luxurious life. And, although Captain Schiller is said to have exercised his office with much humaneness, it is quite probable that young Schiller got from his father's experience in Gmünd the inspiration for the horrible scenes in "Intrigue and Love" (*"Kabale und Liebe"*), which even to-day make the reader shudder. A rude tyrant this Duke certainly was; and, as he had kept another outspoken poet among his subjects, Schubart, a close prisoner for years in his feudal Bastille, high up on the Hohenasperg, so he drove the greatest Suabian of them all, Schiller, into flight and banishment at the age of twenty-three.

Yet there is no gainsaying that Carl Eugene, odious tyrant as he was, had his good points, and the academy he had founded, first at the Solitude and next at Stuttgart, was a fine creation. This institution aimed to teach almost everything. It was unique in its scope and methods, educating men of every profession and art, including music, painting, sculpture, even landscape-gardening and engineering. The fine calibre of the graduates shows its sterling worth. Among the fellow pupils of Schiller were such men as van Hoven, the eminent physician; Dannecker, the gifted sculptor (from whom we have the best bust extant of Schiller); Nast and Conz, Mohl, Hegel, Kerner, and Hauff, all men of note

in different lines. Scharffenstein and Massenbach, famous generals, were classmates of Schiller. All of them, though, loved and admired young Schiller; and in 1793, when the great poet, almost at the zenith of his powers, visited his dear Suabian home, they flocked together from everywhere to greet him. Schiller then had just been appointed "Court Councillor" of Weimar, and had written his treatise on the æsthetical education of man. Nevertheless, at a drinking bout with some of these friends of his youth, the heady young wine of the Neckar overpowered him. It had been his intention to "drink them under the table"; instead of which he himself in his vinous ecstasy rolled all over the massive board of the tavern.

Schiller was then thirty-four, married and a university professor; but his buoyant, Bohemian nature clung to him more or less through the remainder of his short life of forty-six years. In this respect, and some others, he reminds one of Robert Burns. Schiller, too, wrote some of the finest Anacreontic songs in the German tongue. And all this despite extreme poverty throughout life. When the Körners offered him an asylum in Dresden for a time, in 1785, he was almost at starvation-point; this was the time when he wrote his magnificent "Song to Joy," as well as his "Don Carlos." When Goethe secured for him a professor's chair of history in Jena, the salary was 200 thalers (about 145 dollars) a year. In those days and until his death, apples and strong coffee had become his inexpensive passion. The apples he usually kept in a drawer of his writing-desk, and their odor, he claimed, furnished him inspiration. When he wrote his last, and perhaps most finished, drama, "William Tell," a year before the end came, he was so overworked and badly nourished that at night he kept himself from falling asleep at his work by munching apples and steeping his bare feet in cold water. When he wrote his "Fiesco," while a fugitive at Mannheim, he lived joyously on a diet of potatoes—potatoes baked, boiled, fried; potatoes, of which he had bought a cart-load from a peasant, and which with their bulk took up about half the floor space in his garret. No wonder his health broke down! Even Chatterton affords no more pathetic spectacle. Abject penury was Schiller's portion through life.

But Schiller came from Suabia, and that explains much. Suabia, cradle of the Hohenstauffens and birthplace of the Minnesingers in mediæval times, as it was of Uhland, Novalis, Hölder-

lin, Kerner, Hauff, Mörike, and so many other notable German poets, has always endowed its children with far more than the normal German share of poetic sentiment and sturdy love of freedom. That small part of Germany, which is popularly termed Schwaben (Suabia), even to-day, though the bulk of it is properly styled Württemberg and portions of it have gone to Bavaria and Baden, has produced more and greater poets than has the whole of Prussia with twenty times its size.

Now, what has made Schiller preeminently the national German poet, the favorite poet of German youth and German women?

Schiller's quenchless enthusiasm; his noble pathos; the extraordinary wealth of imagery in all his writings; his love of liberty and the emphasis he lays everywhere and always on human worth; his contempt of caste and rank distinctions; his moral exaltation, his purity of thought and polish of expression; his glorification of Love and idealization of Woman; the wide range of his sympathies and of his chosen subjects—these qualities of his work, doubtless, made him the favorite author of German youth and womankind, nay, of the German masses. Together, these distinctive qualities of his muse constitute a claim to affection and popularity such as no other German writer has ever been able to present, not even Goethe or Heine. Any one at all familiar with German literature will know from numberless biographies of noted Germans that it was Schiller's works, and more particularly his poems, which moulded their early thought and youthful aspirations. All through the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, Schiller stamped his impress on the national mind and heart. That Germany was known through those three generations as the "country of high thinking and low living" was, primarily, due to Schiller. His idealism and cosmopolitanism prevailed among high and low. Rarely has a poet exercised for so long such an overpowering and general sway over the sentiment and intellect of his race. It overtopped by far that of Goethe. Indeed, Goethe has never been "popular" in Germany, though a few of his works have been. He has always been, and he remains to-day, the poet of the select few; and not only Heine, but such second-rate stars as Uhland, Theodore Körner, Kleist, Hauff, have been, during nearly all this time, successfully vying with him for the prize of popularity. If ever a poet could be termed "national," in the broadest sense of that word, it is Schiller.

This is seen by every test. First and last, millions more of his works have been sold than of those of any other German writer. His poems are to be found in nearly every German home, however humble, by the Rhine or the Hudson, the Danube or the Mississippi. Schiller's dramas are performed on every German-speaking stage on the globe, and they always "draw," whether in Berlin or New York. Quotations from Schiller are more often used and more generally understood by Germans than are those from Shakespeare in the English-speaking world. About the last things a native German will forget abroad are the ballads of Schiller he learnt by heart when a small boy.

The Schiller conception of the world; his notion of country, home and family, of love, honor and duty; his belief in the brotherhood of man, the oneness of the universe, and the inherent goodness of the human heart; his idea of Divine government—these things, within a decade of the poet's death, became part and parcel of the German soul. On November 10th, 1859, at the hundredth anniversary of Schiller's birth, though Germany was at that date still a political nonentity, and though union under one head and one flag seemed immeasurably distant, the unanimity and enthusiasm with which the day was celebrated wherever German speech prevailed, irrespective of political division, were truly remarkable. Every school-child of that period was taught to be, and did become, a lover and admirer of Schiller.

Thus it remained until the war with France in 1870-71. As in so many other things, that war wrought a change in this respect as well. Political unity was achieved; the aggressive, turbulent neighbor, whose power had hung for centuries like a nightmare over German aspirations, lay in the dust; Germany was once more great and potent; her material resources under the new impetus developed at a wonderful rate; the French milliards seemed inexhaustible, and the nation was intoxicated with its success and military glory. The Schiller ideals vanished from the national consciousness; they were submerged, buried out of sight for the time. In lieu of the "brotherhood of man" was taught the new creed of the sovereign virtue of military supremacy and of a narrow Jingoism. Germany became wedded to a crude and brutal materialism, and this by a natural process of reaction. It became the fashion among the younger generation of Germans to sneer at Schiller and his idealism; to minimize his merits as a

poet, and to deny his vocation as a moral teacher of the nation. This state of feeling was strongest in Germany during the eighties, and the young school of poets and dramatists which then arose had inscribed contempt of Schiller on its banner. What, they argued, do we want of a poet who glorified foreign nations, foreign rulers, foreign popular heroes—one who had not even a presentiment of our own national grandeur,—who was instrumental in depreciating the sense of our own fitness to play a conspicuous part on the world's stage? These young writers, in a word, tabooed and ostracized Schiller and his works, and when referring to him in their own writings did so in terms of reproach or scorn. This was the time when nearly every young German deemed himself a Bismarck, a disciple of Nietzsche, and a believer in the creed of the Overman and of a status "beyond good and evil."

But, after all, this was a condition of things which could not last long, because it was unnatural. These young spokesmen of the literary life of Germany never represented the bone and sinew of the nation, nor the feelings and thoughts of the average German. Their rude "naturalism" and their abnormal national conceit clashed with the better self of their countrymen, and from the war of opinions rose anew the Schiller cult, the popular appreciation of his works. During the past fifteen years, Schiller has been replaced on the pedestal on which he had stood for so long. Once more the German people, high and low, recognize in him the poet who most admirably expresses the German soul at its best, the national consciousness at its truest.

It is of interest, then, to note the ideals, literary, political and social, for which Schiller stood; how far these have been realized since his death, or else discarded or modified. To bring out these points involves at the same time the presenting of a species of political and psychological portrait of the German people of Schiller's time and of to-day.

Schiller's chief ideals were political freedom and social enfranchisement, not for his own Germany alone, but for the whole civilized world; this meant, of course, cosmopolitanism. In the main, Goethe shared these ideals with him (at least until after Schiller's death, on May 9th, 1805), and it was this fact in part which made the two great poets friends and mutual admirers—a fact to which Goethe once gave whimsical expression, saying:

"The German people ought not to quarrel as to which of us is the greater, but to be glad they have got two such fellows."

In his work Schiller was extremely conscientious. No pains were spared by him, either in the conception or execution. Schiller's correspondence with Goethe and a number of other literary friends for whose opinion he cared, makes that plain on almost every page. His historical and philosophical writings were based on enormous study and research. So were his dramas. The preliminary work to "Mary Stuart," "Don Carlos," "Maid of Orleans," "Bride of Messina," "William Tell," "Wallenstein," embraced years of diligent inquiry. His "Robbers," even, the firstling of his dramatic labors, was founded on real events which at the time created a sensation, and so was his "Intrigue and Love." Though beautiful, finished diction was natural to him—and, indeed, no other German poet can compare with him in the epigrammatic, highly chiselled form—he would rewrite his manuscript again and again, and would take counsel with others, until the manner of expression tallied precisely with his thought.

Schiller's poetic activity is usually divided into three periods: first, the period of "storm and stress," ending in 1783, during which he produced his earlier poems and the three dramas, "Robbers," "Fiesco," and "Intrigue and Love"; next, the æsthetic-philosophical period, concluding with his historical works and the "Æsthetic Education of Man"; and, lastly, the so-called classical period, in conjunction with Goethe, 1793-1805. Though the man did not alter materially all this time, the character and scope of his work widened and became chastened with maturity.

In his youthful dramas, especially, there is, here and there, license rather than liberty. The outward circumstances of his life had much to do, no doubt, with this. His native part of Germany, Würtemberg, was ruled much as it is described in "Intrigue and Love"—a seraglio and all the other sensual delights for the petty autocrat, and misery, oppression, injustice for the people. Schiller strongly sympathized with the first stage of the French Revolution—as, indeed, did the vast majority of the German nation, high and low—and the National Assembly made "Monsieur Gilles" (that is the way Schiller's name was spelled in the document) an honorary citizen of France. But the Reign of Terror caused him to modify his first opinions, and in the "Song of the Bell" we find the reflex of this change.

Indeed, it would be going too far to assert that Schiller at any time of his life had well-defined political views, or, at least, a political programme. His love of liberty was in part born with him, in part imbibed from the accounts of the American War of Independence, and in part due to what he saw and heard around him as boy and youth. It was an ardent feeling with him, but it never led him to formulate an ideal of government; his notions regarding government, indeed, vacillated considerably during different times of his life. It is but necessary to read his works with some attention to become convinced of this. In his dramatic fragment, "Demetrius," in the scene of the Polish Diet, he puts into the mouth of Prince Leo Sapieha the words:

"Majority! What is majority? Majority means absurdity;
For reason has e'er been only with the few. . . .
That state is doomed, I say, must perish soon or late,
Where mere majority decides and holds the scale."

In his quatrain, "*Majestas Populi*," a contribution to the "Xenien," he takes even broader ground against the cardinal principle of modern republics; and so he does, too, in his short poem, "To a Reformer of the World." In "The Song of the Bell," written soon after the September horrors of 1792, he castigates the men and women of the Mountain. In the "Bride of Messina," in form one of his most beautiful dramas (and in which he made an attempt to revive the ancient chorus), he decries the "rule of the multitude," "mob rule," etc. He speaks to similar import in "The Misanthrope." Contrast this with the many passages in his earlier works where he talks in quite a violent strain of human rights, rule of the people, justifies (in "Fiesco") tyrannicide, etc. Nevertheless, with all these changes, and though Schiller's liberalism never rose to the height and dignity of a political system, the love of freedom, the longing for juster and more enlightened forms of government, burned steadily on. And it was in his very last dramatic production, in "William Tell," that these sentiments once more found sublime utterance:

"Nay, there is a limit to tyrannic power:
When the oppressed nowhere justice finds,
His burden is unbearable—he stretches forth
His hands and from high heaven
He seizes once again his inalienable rights."

In his "William Tell," then, the last and clarified expression of his political and social ideals, we see Schiller once more glorifying the creed of his youth. When the play was for the first time performed in Berlin, the general conviction was that in it the poet had aimed at the great Corsican, though this seems to have been an error. But, at any rate, among all the works of Schiller appealing to that abstract love of liberty in Germans which forms so strange a contrast with frequent passive acquiescence in practical tyranny, none has equalled "William Tell."

However, it is in the nature of things that the present radically altered political conditions of Germany should also have modified the popular German views as to Schiller's political and social creed; for, measured against the status prevailing in Schiller's time, with its iron caste and rank distinctions, its absolute autocracy, its denial of all political rights to the subject, Germany to-day is even a paradise. To a certain extent, and in a certain sense, Schiller's creed no longer applies to present-day Germany. Goethe (in his "Talks with Eckermann") occasionally caught a glimpse of Germany's political future. Schiller never did. The very conception of a modern republican form of government, of a constitutional monarchy, was foreign to him. His historical works, especially his "Alienation of the Netherlands" and his "Thirty Years' War," are serviceable even to-day. They abound in interesting details obtained at first hand, and they throughout breathe the spirit of liberalism. But, of a great harmonious conception of the modern body politic, they show nothing. It is liberty *per se* which enthuses the poet.

Schiller's influence abroad has, perhaps, been greater than that of any other German writer, with the possible exception of Heine. During parts of the nineteenth century, Schiller's dramas competed with Shakespeare's on the English-speaking stage. Carlyle did much in England, by his translations and otherwise, to popularize him, and Coleridge aided in the task. In this country, it was, however, a German who felt the call to deliver Schiller's message. The man was Carl Follen, exiled from home because of his liberal political views. His lectures on "Schiller's Life and Dramas," given before Harvard in 1832-1833, accomplished much in this line. Harvard University it was, too, which this year first celebrated, on American soil, the centenary of the poet's death.

But, indeed, memorial ceremonies or festivities are being held in multitudes of places—above all, of course, in Germany, where almost every town of any size is giving a series of model performances of Schiller dramas; where "*Festschriften*"—publications specially devoted to the purpose—are appearing, adding more or less new material to our knowledge of Schiller's life; where the Schiller prize for the best new dramatic production, awarded every third year by the Kaiser and a committee of literary craftsmen, will this year be strenuously striven for. Among these new Schiller publications, specially deserving are those published under the auspices and patronage of the Suabian Schiller Society and of the Schiller Stiftung in Weimar; but perhaps even greater merit attaches to a book, "*Schiller's Jugendfreunde*" ("The Friends of Schiller's Youth"), by Julius von Hartmann, which is based on authentic data and furnishes much that is new and of interest. It was stated in some public prints that the Kaiser was to offer a large prize for the successful completion of the two most promising fragments left by Schiller, viz., "Demetrius" and "Warbeck." The former takes its subject from Russian history and was finished entirely in its plot and about one-half in its metrical diction. It shows the rise and fall of the "False Dmitri," the pretender to the throne at Moscow and the alleged son of Ivan the Terrible. Doubtless, if carried out on the lines laid down by Schiller, this would make a strong drama full of human interest. The first and second acts are finished and rank among the best the poet has produced. The experiment would be all the more interesting because no Russian, or any other writer, has ever written a drama on this topic. "Warbeck" treats of a stirring episode in British history, at the close of the War of the Roses. Schiller had not proceeded quite as far with this as with the other.

The year 1905 sees, then, Schiller among the few generally recognized great poets of the world. His message in the main still rings true to our ears and to our hearts.

WOLF VON SCHIERBRAND.